



Fort Belknap Indian Community

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EXHIBIT

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DATE

2/8/13

HB

299

Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Tribal Govt.)
Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboiné and the Gros Ventre
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

TESTIMONY OF THE FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY

**'An Act Establishing the Patrick A. Pyette Memorial Highway between
Chinook and Zurich along U.S. Highway 2: Establishing the Joshua
Raven Chief Thomas 'Josh' Rutherford Memorial Highway Between
Zurich and Harlem along U.S. Highway 2'**

Testimony to the State of Montana Department of Transportation

Good afternoon. My name is Loren 'Bum' Stiffarm and I serve as the Chief Administrative Officer for the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. In my position I have oversight of all the Tribal Programs at Fort Belknap among these are the Law Enforcement Services, Detention and Tribal Courts.

The Fort Belknap Indian Community Council strongly supports House Bill No. 299 in naming portions of U.S. Highway 2 after the late Pat Pyette a Blaine County Police Officer killed while on duty in December 2011. The bill also establishes a portion of U.S. Highway 2 from Zurich to Harlem in honor of the late Joshua Raven Chief Thomas 'Josh' Rutherford, who died in the line of duty in May 2003. (Incidentally the year is wrong in the language of HB ~~286~~ and we recommend changing the date to make it correct)

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Both officers were extremely dedicated to their chosen profession of law enforcement services, protecting the general public and the love of their families. They displayed a strong dedication to Blaine County, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, and the State of Montana and most importantly they worked hard to make all of our communities a safe place for our children to grow up in.

Josh was an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre Tribe at Fort Belknap. He worked in the Criminal Justice field beginning in 1997, starting out as a detention officer where he supervised prisoners while following guidelines formed by the federal, criminal and civil statutes. It was here that he got his first experience in law enforcement, to which he was extremely devoted.

He gained additional experience in this profession becoming a police officer for Blaine County. He handled many cases for Blaine County and including those involving the Fort Belknap Law Enforcement Services (tribal police) and other state and federal agencies. Josh was also an instructor for other police officers as a Use of Force Instructor at the Law Enforcement Academy.

As a sworn officer, Josh had been through numerous incidents and trials and understood the entire process from arresting an individual to going through the entire process of guarding prisoners through trial and affording them the opportunity to sit through the entire trial. He became very knowledgeable about law enforcement as well as all justice arenas.

Josh was killed in the line of duty on May 29, 2003, while responding to a domestic disturbance incident near Harlem where he lived. At the funeral there were over one thousand people in attendance and well over 400 law enforcement and plain clothed officers attending the services to honor Josh.

Josh left behind a son; Thomas Rutherford was only eleven years old at the time. He now attends college in Fort Belknap and is here with us today as well as his grandmother Maxine Clifford. All of the relatives from the maternal and paternal sides of his family are firmly in support this bill. Thomas even gave part of his fathers eulogy at the funeral. I thank them for coming today.

There are many, many people not only from Fort Belknap but from his fathers reservation who have contacted us and who support this bill. It is truly a wonderful gesture for Josh and his family and for that we thank you very much.

However with all due respect for the sponsor, we respectfully request that you take these recommendations for the bill.

1. Josh lost his life during this horrific incident on May 29, 2003 not 2004 as listed in language of the bill, so we are requesting the date change.
2. Josh was a member of the Gros Ventre Tribe of Indians at Fort Belknap and we are requesting that in his honor, you extend the portion of Highway 2 in his memorial to include the roadway from Zurich to Fort Belknap and not Zurich to Harlem as listed in the bill.

In closing, I again thank the chairperson of this committee and committee members and the sponsors of this bill that is honoring Mr. Pyette and Josh. I thank and praise you on behalf of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council and all of the enrolled members of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of Fort Belknap.